



# Occupational Therapy Tips!

## Home Motor Skills Programme

### Fine & Gross Motor Skills

- In this series of advice sheets from the Occupational Therapy Team, we first focus on the gross motor elements that are the foundation for all fine motor tasks that children complete at home and school.
- The focus of the programme then shifts to educationally relevant fine motor activities such as colouring, handwriting and scissor use.
- Each area can be worked through week by week and each section also contains links to great websites where further information and activity ideas can be found.



Adapted from;

*Move your Body Fun Deck Cards by Super Duper Publications*

*Mary Sheridan's From Birth to Five Years: Children's Developmental Progress by Sharma, A. & Cockerill, H.*



This week we're talking about....

## Core Stability

### What is it?

Core stability is the ability of your stomach and lower back muscles to keep you upright. We need good core stability to sit up straight and, in turn, use our hands properly.

### How to help?

The following activities can be done at home to develop core stability

- Bridges
- Crab Walks
- Lying on stomach while reading or watching television
- Superman pose (Lie on stomach and lift arms and legs off the ground for as long as possible)
- Animal Walks (Crawling like a bear stand like a flamingo, slither like a snake etc.)
- Bouncing or sitting on an exercise ball



### Find more activity ideas at;

<https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/resources/information-packs/core-stability-activities/>

[https://www.swft.nhs.uk/application/files/6714/5995/2571/gross\\_motor\\_skills.pdf](https://www.swft.nhs.uk/application/files/6714/5995/2571/gross_motor_skills.pdf)



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## Shoulder Stability

### What is it?

Shoulder stability is the ability to pull together the muscles around the shoulder to hold it steady. This allows the arm and hands to move in different directions e.g. shoulder holds the arm in place while the hand holds a pencil and moves across the page.



### How to help?

The following activities can be done at home to develop shoulder stability;

- Weight-bearing exercises e.g. wheelbarrow walks, animal walks, chair push-ups
- Everyday household chores like wiping the table and pushing the vacuum are great for shoulder stability development
- Arm Spirals (put both arms out to the side and move in circles)
- Push/Pull activities e.g. pushing a pram, tug-of-war, wall pushes
- Drawing/writing on a vertical surface e.g. wall, easel, whiteboard

### Find more activity ideas at;

[https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ot/InfoSheet\\_F.pdf](https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ot/InfoSheet_F.pdf)

[https://www.swft.nhs.uk/application/files/7714/5995/2571/fine\\_motor\\_skills.pdf](https://www.swft.nhs.uk/application/files/7714/5995/2571/fine_motor_skills.pdf)

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## Hand Strength

### What is it?

The small muscles of our fingers and hands need to be strong to do everyday tasks like buttons, zips and holding a fork. The stronger the muscles are, the longer they can do activities such as writing without tiring.



### How to help?

The following activities can be done at home to develop hand strength;

- Lego/Construction toys
- Playdoh (pulling, pinching, stretching, rolling)
- Popping bubble wrap
- Clothes pegs or tweezer games
- Practicing buttons and zips
- Ripping up paper or card to make a picture

### Find more activity ideas at;

[https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ot/InfoSheet\\_E.pdf](https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ot/InfoSheet_E.pdf)

[https://www.swft.nhs.uk/application/files/7714/5995/2571/fine\\_motor\\_skills.pdf](https://www.swft.nhs.uk/application/files/7714/5995/2571/fine_motor_skills.pdf)

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/lho/corknorthlee/therapy/paediatric-occupational-therapy/fine-motor-skills.pdf>



This week we're talking about...

## Hand Preference

### What is it?

Hand preference is the consistent use of one hand over the other (i.e. being right or left handed). Children begin to show preference between 2-3 years old and should have a clear preference by 4.



### How to help?

- Observe your child doing everyday activities and see if they tend to use one hand more than the other. If they do, or if one hand is clearly better than the other, encourage your child to use this as their “doing” hand.
- During activities that need two hands (e.g. opening a bottle) encourage them to use their “doing” hand and the other as the “helper” hand. Try offering lots of games and activities that need two hands throughout the day to give them opportunity to practice. Ideas include;
  - Lego
  - Opening bottles, jars, packets, buttons, zips
  - Drawing with stencils
  - Peeling stickers off a sheet
  - Cooking activities like stirring, measuring etc.
  - Household chores like helping to fill/empty the dishwasher, set the table etc.
- If your child has difficulty remembering which hand to use try putting a sticker, smiley face or a dot of nail varnish on their “doing” hand.

### Find more activity ideas at;

[https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ot/InfoSheet\\_B.pdf](https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ot/InfoSheet_B.pdf)

[https://www.swft.nhs.uk/application/files/7714/5995/2571/fine\\_motor\\_skills.pdf](https://www.swft.nhs.uk/application/files/7714/5995/2571/fine_motor_skills.pdf)

[https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/lho/cor\\_knorthlee/therapy/paediatric-occupational-therapy/hand-dominance.pdf](https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/lho/cor_knorthlee/therapy/paediatric-occupational-therapy/hand-dominance.pdf)

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## Pencil Grasp

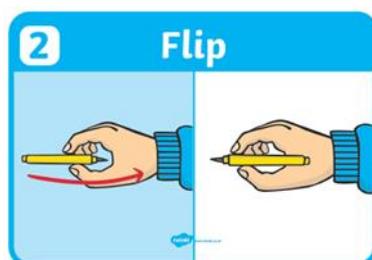
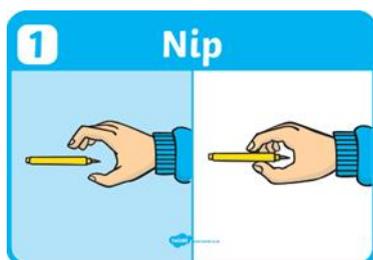
### What is it?

Pencil grasp is how we hold a pen or pencil. Most people hold a pencil with our thumb and 1 or 2 fingers, and resting it against the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> (see pictures right). However, any grasp where a child can write comfortably, at a reasonable speed and not tire is a good pencil grasp.



### How to help?

- Encourage your child to pick up their pencil using “Nip, Flip and Grip”. See pictures below. This means they're holding it correctly from the start.
- Practice writing and drawing in fun ways e.g. making birthday cards, puzzles, writing shopping lists, drawing favourite characters.



Find more information and activity ideas at;

[https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ot/InfoSheet\\_A.pdf](https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ot/InfoSheet_A.pdf)

<https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/resources/ot-activityinformation-sheets/holding-a-pencil/>

[https://www.nbss.ie/sites/default/files/publications/handwriting\\_tips\\_sheet\\_2.pdf](https://www.nbss.ie/sites/default/files/publications/handwriting_tips_sheet_2.pdf)

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This week we're talking about...

## Pre-writing Shapes

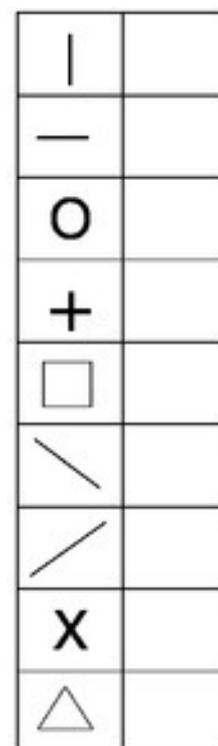
### What are they?

There are 9 pre-writing shapes that children should be able to copy before starting to learn to write letters. These 9 shapes (see picture) make up the basic shapes of all letters of the alphabet.

### How to help?

Practice drawing pre-writing shapes in different ways such as;

- In sand
- In shaving foam
- Playdoh
- Magnetic board (see picture below)
- Blo-Pens
- Finger Paint



### Find more activity ideas at;

[https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ot/InfoSheet\\_H.pdf](https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ot/InfoSheet_H.pdf)

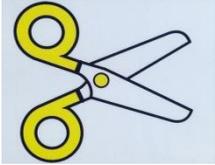
[https://www.swft.nhs.uk/application/files/5614/5995/2571/handwriting\\_development.pdf](https://www.swft.nhs.uk/application/files/5614/5995/2571/handwriting_development.pdf)

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/lho/corknorthlee/therapy/paediatric-occupational-therapy/paediatric-occupational-therapy-pre-writing-skills.pdf>

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## Scissor Skills

### What are they?

There are several steps to using scissors correctly. They are;

1. Opening and closing scissors
2. Snipping
3. Cutting a straight line
4. Stopping
5. Cutting curved lines
6. Cutting angled shapes (e.g. squares, triangles)

Keep your thumb up.



### How to help?

The following activities can be done at home to develop scissor skills;

- Teach your child to hold the scissors correctly. Their thumb should be facing up (see picture)
- Cut different types of material like card, playdoh, straws
- Start cutting wide lines then make them narrower over time

Find more activity ideas at;

<https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/resources/ot-activityinformation-sheets/scissor-skills/>

[https://www.swft.nhs.uk/application/files/5714/5995/2571/scissor\\_skills.pdf](https://www.swft.nhs.uk/application/files/5714/5995/2571/scissor_skills.pdf)

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